

Newsroom – Neal Jareczek

Narrative Description of Current Classroom Technology Use

Borah High School B.E.S.T (Better Employment Skills Training) is a special education program that pairs students with and without disabilities in a production setting. Our philosophy of “Learn, Work, Explore, Help Others and Make Your Own Way in the World” launches individuals into successful futures through real work experiences on and off our campus. While the program has primarily emphasized vocational training a clear need for basic academic instruction is present. Though the program serves ages 16-21, the majority of our students read at or below the third grade level.

In response to our students desire and need to improve both reading and comprehension we created *Newsroom*. *Newsroom* teaches reading in an exciting, interesting and engaging manner that involves each student in both news story development and presentation. This two period class requires students to search the Internet each morning for a rotating agenda of stories. Each day students find world, national and local news stories as well as covering national and local sports, weather and special features. Students have learned how to use over a hundred different news sources as well as download sound, video and pictures to make each story come to life.

Each student is required to find and edit text, practice and proofread their story and then read, sign or use digitized speech to present the finished report to the class. All of this preparation must meet a daily deadline, which often requires students to prepare reports in advance of class. Many students come to school as early as 6:30 AM to begin searching for stories.

The presentation portion of newsroom runs a full hour and links three Internet capable computers with a LCD projector and screen as well as speakers. A different student serves as a “News Manager” each week and is in charge of all controls during the presentation of the news. Discussion follows every story as well as questions from staff, students and visitors. Students are often challenged to do follow up stories as most stories generate the need for maps, extra illustrations or data. A recent story on the “Globalflyer” solo flight found some students gathering additional information during *Newsroom* presentation time as there were so many questions about the story. Students have become remarkably efficient and able in navigating the Internet and using Microsoft Office tools such as Word and PowerPoint to create ever more interesting and professional looking stories.

Narrative Description of Impact of Classroom Technology on Student Performance

Newsroom has changed everyone involved. Not only are students showing technological competency but they are displaying an enthusiasm and interest in the world around them. Parents state that their child displays a sudden first time interest in both electronic and printed news. Students arrive early at school so they can have access to the computers before anyone else because they want first choice at a national story. A student who was too shy to sit anywhere but at the back door of the classroom during news presentation now stands in front of the screen and both points at and states the long term weather forecast. A non-verbal student uses a digitized speech program called “Read Please” to read aloud the story they have developed.

Student improvement in reading and comprehension is both obvious and measurable. Through both staff observation and constant checks for understanding students display an increase in sight vocabulary, word attack skills and individual word comprehension. Students who could not read but a few words at the start of the year now get through a paragraph with almost no help. Staff, students or visitors often check for word definitions or ask questions about the accuracy of a story. Recently students have even pointed out some typographical and spelling errors in stories from national sources.

In addition to observational measurements of student success we are using a series of formal measures gathered in training sessions from The Idaho Literacy Component on Assessment. These will include The San Diego Quick Assessment of Reading Ability, The Fry Oral Reading Test, The Critchlow Verbal Language Scale, and The McLeod Assessment of Reading Comprehension. These measures were given to a mid-year graduating student and showed one grade level of improvement in reading ability and one and half year growth in comprehension over the two years he was in the program. At age eighteen an increase such as this was significant to both the student and his family. As the student said when he graduated: “Newsroom rocks!” Clearly, *Newsroom works*.

Narrative Budget Description of Proposal for Classroom Purchases

Our budget is straightforward and simple. We are asking for the purchase of a 1600 Lumens LCD projector and 60” Smartboard Presentation Screen to enhance our *Newsroom* Program.

The budget is as follows:

Total Cost of Project: \$1889.00

Itemized List of Project Components:

Item

Hitachi CPS235 1600 Lumens LCD Projector	878.00
Smartboard 560 60” Presentation Screen	<u>1,011.00</u>
	\$1.889.00

Projector and SmartBoard screen are priced according to the Boise District 2005 Technology Buylist

The Vendor for the Projector is Data Projections.

The Vendor for the Screen is Troxell.

Narrative Description of Enhanced Teaching through Implementation of Proposal

We want to build on our initial success with *Newsroom*. When we created the program it was done with very little support from the school other than a few hundred dollars for the cabling and controls between the computers and the projector. The teacher purchased the projector and screen with his own money and with the support of a bus driver who believed in the program. The room in which *Newsroom* takes place is small and needs expansion. The teacher will remodel the classroom this summer. This will allow additional and more comfortable seating and students will be at tables rather than the current audience layout.

With the purchase of the projector and screen mentioned in the budget we will be able to expand both the impact and accessibility of *Newsroom* presentations. Having a second projector and Smartboard will allow additional students to participate in the powerful process of gathering and presenting news stories. Having two screens and two projectors will allow students to actually work as a team in covering stories. It essentially opens up a second window on the world for our classroom. Smartboard technology will enable students for the first time the ability to control the computer and its display while they are delivering their own presentation. Imagine a student giving a report on Mount St. Helens and as they touch an image the screen displays a downloaded video of an eruption. Visualize a student reading a sports report and when they precisely cue the screen a slideshow begins that they control.

With the modest expenditure requested for these two items the Qwest Foundation can be assured that they are enhancing the education of our most needy learners in a program that has a proven record of success. By expanding and enriching *Newsroom* the foundation is giving students who are nearing the end of their public education a last important chance at achieving true academic success while setting them on a path toward lifelong learning.

Qwest Foundation for Education Grant Expenditure Plan
(Standard IFARMS Budget Format)

Activity	100	200	300	400	500	TOTAL
	Salaries	Benefits	Contractual Agreements	Materials and Supplies	Capital Objects	
Purchase of Hitachi CPS235 1600 Lumens LCD Projector					878.00	878.00
Purchase of Smartboard 560 60" Presentation Screen					1,011.00	1,011.00
TOTAL					1,889.00	1,889.00

